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ABSTRACT

This study centers BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students' experiences in service-learning courses at a predominantly White college. Researchers conducted eight semi-structured interviews using qualitative case study methods and analyzed the data through a critical consciousness framework. Data illuminated tensions in predominantly White spaces, perils and promises of preparation, and relationality with community partners demonstrating how Whiteness is often centered unintentionally. Based on the data collected, the authors suggest recommendations for implementing pedagogy that addresses the lived experiences of BIPOC students in service-learning courses.

Keywords: critical consciousness pedagogy, racism, BIPOC students, Whiteness, critical service learning

Despite much scholarship making known the shortcomings of traditional service learning, there are still a number of courses that maintain a problematic curriculum and pedagogy. Higher education stakeholders have, for some time, retained service-learning programs and courses in an effort to stay connected with their local communities (Ostrander, 2004; Sandy & Holland, 2006). These efforts have included institutional mission statements emphasizing community engagement, promoting the legitimacy of community-engaged scholarship, and developing centers for civic engagement to support faculty creation of service-learning courses (Kuh, 2008). However, Clark-Taylor (2017) explains the most dominant community engagement models are often charity focused (Butin & Seider, 2012) or have a set up whereby college students, often White[1], middle-, and upper-class, are established as authorities over the community. This is especially concerning when considering how under-resourced BIPOC[2] (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities make up the majority of those "served" (Mitchell et al., 2012).

The experiences of BIPOC students in service-learning courses repeatedly indicate where and how oppressive models are employed. Yet, "most research on service-learning analyzes the experiences of white students from relatively affluent backgrounds working in non-university settings with less affluent populations" (Price et al., 2014, pp. 23-34). This is due, in no small part, to the lack of accommodation for students who have to work, commute, or have other responsibilities outside of schooling, which contributes to the

[1] We capitalize White and Whiteness when referring to people who are racialized as White, and their cultural norms, including those with European ethnicities. To capitalize "White" is to name it as a race as opposed to viewing it as a neutral and standard identity.

[2] The use of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) is meant to acknowledge the unique position Black and Indigenous identities hold in the history and creation of race.

longstanding reputation of service learning as the "Whitest of the White" (Butin, 2006, p. 482; Price et al., 2014). The effort to create and maintain community engagement courses is backed by the understanding that it benefits students with leadership and communication skills, but little attention is devoted to exploring if and how service-learning courses can empower students to become more socially aware of systemic and societal issues (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009). Many service-learning courses use the language of community engagement with the end goal of student learning for future success, as opposed to goals that include how the community partner can also benefit (Clifford, 2017; Wollschleger et al., 2020).

Pedagogy of Whiteness

Scholars have researched how Whiteness continues to be centered in service learning's curriculum, pedagogy, and practices (Bocci, 2015; Endres & Gould, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2012). This study utilizes Whiteness, the idea that people racialized as White and their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared. The researchers align with Mitchell et al. (2012) and further contextualize Whiteness as a pedagogy, in service learning, that places White racial identity above BIPOC students and community partners. This framework demonstrates how Whiteness becomes a "racial perspective or a world-view…. supported by material practices and institutions" (Leonardo, 2002, pp. 31-32). Whiteness informs why underprepared students enter local communities with their biases, a saviorism or authoritative sense of self, and a general lack of understanding of societal issues (Endres & Gould, 2009; Mitchell, 2008). When BIPOC students enroll in courses designed around a pedagogy of Whiteness, they often report "feelings from tokenism and alienation, to becoming cultural translators, to describing their satisfaction of 'giving back,' to critically inserting their own ideas as feedback to change the way the classes are structured" (Price et al., 2014, p. 27). BIPOC students cannot engage in Whiteness the way White students can, which is why their experiences, when shared, may point to how prevalent the pedagogy of Whiteness is in service learning even when the intentions of instructors are based in critical service learning (CSL) practices (Mitchell & Donahue, 2008; Mitchell, 2008).

It is important to acknowledge the similarities and distinctions between the treatment of BIPOC students and community partners, as work to undo the pedagogy of Whiteness takes place in and outside the classroom (Mitchell et al., 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). Scholars regularly critique service learning by locating the practice of Whiteness (Bocci, 2015; Green, 2003, 2011; Mitchell, 2012; Munoz et al., 2019; Novick et al., 2011). More recently, some scholars in civic engagement literature have shifted focus from decentering Whiteness to exploring how BIPOC identities and cultures can be centered and the significance of this to critical practices (Paris & Alim, 2014). By centering BIPOC students' voices, the problematic issues and promising alternatives that benefit BIPOC students and community partners and, by extension, White students, are illuminated.

Critical Consciousness Pedagogy

The concepts of critical consciousness pedagogy (Freire, 1973; hooks, 2003), critical service learning (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004; King, 2004; Mitchell, 2008), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) (Paris & Alim, 2014) informed this study. Critical pedagogy (Greene et al., 2009; Freire, 1973; hooks, 2003) asserts that teaching should push students to examine power relations in their communities and courses by promoting authentic dialogue and social change within those contexts. Additionally, culturally sustaining civic engagement pedagogy is rooted in an understanding that all people are members of multiple, overlapping societies, and that this should inform how instructors engage with students in the learning process (Kuttner, 2016). On combining critical and

culturally sustaining pedagogy, Paris and Alim (2014) further explain that BIPOC students should not be expected to have an extensive awareness of power relations in their communities, as they, just like White students with Whiteness, have a lot to unpack in the historical, racial, and social makeup of their identities. The assumption that BIPOC students have this innate ability lends to the centralization of Whiteness, as there is less urgency in teaching BIPOC students to deconstruct what their identities mean in the context of their own society. Another important move away from Whiteness and toward critical consciousness is to transform conversations on Whiteness in service-learning courses to acknowledge BIPOC lived experiences. Leonardo (2002) explains BIPOC students "benefit from an education that analyzes the implications of Whiteness," since "their colorness is relational to [Whiteness]" (p. 31). In this way, instructors should question what knowledge they strive to teach, for who, and why. Even critical concepts can "empower or oppress," depending on how they are implemented in the classroom (Winans-Solis, 2014, p. 619).

Some characteristics of critical and culturally sustaining pedagogy include critical self-reflection for students, educators, and community partners based on their lived experiences, well-designed interactive projects, engaging discussions, and authentic assessments rooted in the community partner experience. How these components are employed is another key factor in determining how service-learning courses can be empowering or oppressive for BIPOC students. The "starting point" of a movement away from the pedagogy of Whiteness to critical consciousness pedagogy is within the experiences and voices of students. CSL must "confirm and legitimate the knowledges and experiences through which students give meaning to their everyday lives" (Giroux et al., 1989, p. 235).

Therefore, the primary questions of this study were:

1. What are BIPOC students' experiences in service-learning courses at a predominately White institution?
2. How does centering BIPOC students' experiences illuminate Whiteness in the courses?

METHODOLOGY

Case Study Context

This research implemented case study methods defined by Yin (2003) as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 13). The case study focused on perspectives of BIPOC students who enrolled in courses with a service-learning component. The study takes place at a private, non-denominational college in the Intermountain West with primarily White faculty. Its undergraduate enrollment is just under 2,000 students, and the campus is located in an urban setting. The racial diversity of the college is Black, (2%); Asian, (3%); Latinx, (11%); International, (non-citizen, 5%); Multiracial, (5%); American Indian, (1%); White, (70%), Unknown, (4%). The college encourages service learning in courses and supports the projects with a stipend through their civic engagement office. The courses described in the study have a service-learning component ranging from first-year learning communities, courses from a program for first-generation, underrepresented students, and other subject oriented courses. Not all service-learning courses at the college involve children/youth, but those that were identified from our interviews did. The office of civic engagement offers professional development opportunities on a volunteer basis, but no professional development is required to implement service learning.

The two researchers who conducted this study are (1) a college student/researcher, Valencia-Garcia, who has taken service-learning courses, and (2) the Faculty Fellow for Civic Engagement/Education Faculty member, Coles-Ritchie. In the paper, we apply participant observation methods in that Valencia-Garcia participated in service-

learning courses and Coles-Ritchie interviewed him about his experience, and Coles-Ritchie taught a service-learning course referenced by students in their interviews. As such, we will use first person pronouns to describe the research. Participant observation allows for an insider perspective into a context by allowing researchers the opportunity to experience with participants during those natural situations that comprise the events studied (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2010). Like all researchers in the education field, Coles-Ritchie and Valencia-Garcia come to this context with previous experiences and lived history. Through carefully examining how they came to this setting and interacted with these participants, they have placed themselves in the multilayered contexts of the research (Fine, 1994). Valencia-Garcia is a male-identifying, second-generation, working-class mestizo Mexican-American seeking to understand college students' experiences with identities similar to his own. Coles-Ritchie is a daughter of a European immigrant whose home language was not English, a teacher of diverse language learners (DLLs) in various contexts, and a privileged, middle-class White female. This positionality afforded the authors the opportunity to analyze the data from two unique perspectives based on student/faculty, male/female, and White/BIPOC identities.

Participants

We obtained a list of students from the college's civic engagement office who identified as BIPOC students and had enrolled in a course/s that had a service-learning component. From that list, we sent emails out asking who would be willing to be interviewed and contacted those willing (see Table 1). Valencia-Garcia interviewed and transcribed the 30-65 minute, semi-structured interviews with exception of the interview that Coles-Ritchie did with him as a participant. Note that we used the identity markers that the students shared with us rather than imposing our own

Table 1. *Chart of Participants*

Participants**	**Self-described Identities***	**Year in college**
Valencia-Garcia	Working class, mestizo Mexican-American, (he, him, his)	4th year
Coles-Ritchie	Middle-class, White, Euro-American (she, her, hers)	Faculty
Alex	Low-income, Latinx, and queer (he, him, his)	2nd year
Brenda	Upper-middle class, Black, Hispanic, member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (she, her, hers)	1st year
Diana	Lower-middle class, Mexican-American, (she, her, hers)	2nd year
Gabby	Middle class, Mexican-American, (she, her, hers)	2nd year
Michelle	Mexican, female-identified, (she, her, hers)	3rd year
Nyla	Working class, African-American, (she, her, hers)	2nd year
Wilson	Black, Gay, working-class, (he, him, his; they, their, them)	4th year

*We included just the identity markers the participants (pseudonyms) shared in the interviews.
**All participants' names are pseudonyms.

identity markers on them. For example, some shared their religious identity and some did not, one used the term African-American and the other Black, and all shared their socio-economic status in different ways. We assert that having participants describe their identities aligns with critical consciousness pedagogy.

Data Analysis

We implemented the inductive-deductive approach, following the construction of a conceptual framework drawn from a comprehensive literature review that guided our data collection and analysis but still left us space for unanticipated information to emerge (Saldaña, 2013). As a faculty and student researcher collaborating on this project, we intentionally decided to have the student, who identifies as a first-generation and BIPOC, conduct the one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the other self-identified BIPOC students. Our thought was the students might feel more open and comfortable sharing their experiences with a peer with at least one shared identity. We wanted the contributions to include both of our perspectives and expertise on a continued and ongoing basis, to create a rich and nuanced analysis. Implementing the relevant first-cycle coding methodologies outlined by Saldaña (2013), we coded and recorded our field notes and interview transcripts to develop categories and themes. This process began with each one of us engaged in open coding all the interview data using the research questions as a guide. Then, we re-coded the aggregated data for common themes. With these emerging themes, we created memos where we began initial organization of the codes and analysis.

Limitations

The design of this study was qualitative including 30- to 65-minute interviews with nine participants. As such, it may not be generalized to larger populations. The findings are also specific to one institution and may not be generalized to other institutions. Additionally, this study focused solely on the experiences of the BIPOC students. To fully understand the program and decisions of service learning at the institution, the instructors and community partners would need to be consulted. In addition, observations of the service-learning site and courses would add to the understanding of BIPOC students' experiences.

Findings and Analysis

Gathering data from BIPOC through interviews by a fellow BIPOC student added complex, valuable data to the research on designing effective service-learning courses. Even though we believe instructors were well intentioned when constructing their service-learning courses, nevertheless, the data from the student interviews shed light on contextual aspects of service learning that unintentionally centered Whiteness. From the coding, re-coding, memo-writing, and multi-layered analysis, three themes emerged that encompassed much of what the participants shared in their interviews. We share and analyze data within each of the following themes: (1) tensions in predominantly White spaces, (2) perils and promises of preparation, and (3) relationality with community partners, through the lens of pedagogy of Whiteness and critical conscious pedagogy.

Tensions in Predominantly White Spaces

Instructors play an integral role in how students come to see their positions in the classroom. When students in service-learning courses work with local communities, the instructor is responsible for framing the relationship between the student, classroom, and community partner. In the interviews, Valencia-Garcia asked all the students what was challenging and rewarding about their service-learning courses. Wilson, a 4th year student, enrolled in a course that had a mandatory service-learning component. The students worked at a local after-school program serving primarily Black children with refugee status. In the interview, he told Valencia-Garcia his initial thoughts after being in the course for a few weeks. He said,

"...girl, make it make sense to me, girl, how you all White and this is an all-White situation and y'all not doing what you supposed to do." Our data demonstrated that instructors, aware of some of these concerns, centered White students because of their desire to employ a CSL pedagogy, such as that discussed in Mitchell et al. (2012). It seemed that these instructors were aware, like Wilson, that White people can have a damaging impact when entering BIPOC communities without recognizing their privilege, the prevalence of White saviorism, and deficit views of marginalized communities (Gonzalez et al., 2008). As a Black student in the college course, Wilson saw this and in questioning it, hinted at his own discomfort. With the demo-graphic of the course being majority White, an issue presents itself: how BIPOC students might feel witnessing White students deconstruct their White racial identity as a precursor to working with young Black children.

Valencia-Garcia, in the same course as Wilson, points to the issue of conversations going nowhere when instructors do not have a clear goal in mind for their class discussions or teaching materials. The instructors attempted to lead discussions on race and class because the community partner consisted of majority Black children from refugee families, but it did not feel significant because it was too general and did not focus on the partner's needs. Valencia-Garcia explains "… It felt like we were talking about race and class forever." This is partially an issue of instructors keeping topics of White privilege at the center, as well as an issue of instructors not knowing how they want their students to engage. Wilson's discomfort with the majority White students in the course highlights the instructor's intentions. Although they may be attempting to be more critical by teaching White students to deconstruct their identities, too "much attention being devoted to deconstruction of the white center," causes "experiences on the margin [to] fade to black" (Leonardo, 2002, p. 45). Leonardo (2002) points us to the precariousness of critical conversations when the pedagogy of Whiteness is latent in service-learning paradigms and beyond. An insistence on examining White racial identity aimlessly is, in fact, the nature of Whiteness.

A pedagogy devoted to White students cannot be expected to provide outcomes that are helpful to BIPOC communities. By definition, such pedagogical practices do not do the work of learning about BIPOC communities, and they end up having to supplement the curriculum. They "feel this responsibility because their instructors share the same assumptions and limitations as White and middle-class students and do not have the capacity to challenge racist and class-biased comments" (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009, p. 180). Alex, a 2nd year student, reports having had to do just this. He had two service-learning courses at the time of our interview, one of which was partnered with a high school, and the other with a city organization to service multiple schools from K-12. Of the course that partnered with the city organization, he said:

> Because of my identities I feel like there's this responsibility for me to educate people. It becomes frustrating after having to do it so much, like having to tap into my lived experiences and into my traumas to benefit somebody else, but like it doesn't benefit me in any way.

With centering the curriculum and pedagogy on White students, the service-learning courses referenced in these interviews repeatedly create a rift between BIPOC students and White students. BIPOC students commonly take issue with the Whiteness they see and feel, like Wilson, and then as the course goes on they have to teach from the margins, like Alex.

When Wilson said, "Y'all not doing what you supposed to do," he complicated the act of centering White students' identities, even if the intention is to have them deconstruct it for a critical outcome. Deconstruction of White racial identity might be essential for White students going into BIPOC communities, but it can be done in ways that do not set them at the center and at

the expense of BIPOC communities and students (Leonardo, 2002; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2014). Wilson's and Valencia-Garcia's concerns additionally bring up questions of how instructors will manage group discussions between White and BIPOC students. An example from another student who was enrolled in the same class as Wilson and Valencia-Garcia, but during a different year, follows. Nyla said:

> I felt very uncomfortable in [the college] class when we started to talk about race and privilege. And a lot of things were just coming up out of students [*sic*] mouths… they were like saying the N-word thinking it was ok, and saying that it's ok to be racist because everyone's a little bit racist and I just felt kind of, very uncomfortable because I was the only Black person in the class…. Only one of our professors was there and she didn't even address the issue.

Her instructors' failure to address the racial slur further illuminates the issue of prioritizing White students. When a White student used a racial slur, the instructor did not hold them accountable because the space was designed for them. Further, Nyla as a Black student is not protected against anti-Black racism and is left to fend for herself, in a class that continuously proves itself to be for White students. The course becomes increasingly more dangerous for Black students and, although this is not completely under the instructor's control, we question how she set the parameters for White students to be placed above the BIPOC students and children at the partner site.

An alternative to this positioning of the class and curriculum against BIPOC students was observed in other student interviews. Brenda, a 1st year student, was enrolled in a course that partnered with an English Language Development (ELD) program at a local high school. At multiple points throughout the interview, she speaks on the pedagogy of the course, making note of how inviting it was for both White and BIPOC students, and how it focused on the high school they were working with. Brenda first described how it was a "student-led class," where each week had one service-learning student "going up and giving a presentation and… an activity." About the effect of this, Brenda continued to explain what she saw as the White students being tasked with thinking critically about who their community partner was because they had to connect racial and immigrant identities to larger social issues, then teach the students to do so through presentation and activity. From the interview we saw that the instructor had multiple strategies of promoting critical service learning, from self-reflections to guest speakers from the high school, to providing students with a pathway to speak with youth and teachers from the high school.

Everything Brenda described previously made it clear that the instructor had fostered a course where students felt a sense of solidarity between themselves and with the high school youth. At the start of the course, Brenda had felt annoyed with how she saw her White peers share various emotional responses, such as guilt and pity, when learning about immigration. As time went on, she explained that she began to feel more comfortable with those peers processing their emotions, sharing how one described himself as "'just this White boy who [comes] in and [doesn't] feel like [he's] doing anything'" for the community partner. About this she said "he had a really hard time…. which was good, he was humbling himself… because [instructor's name] taught us that way." Watching the White student process his own sense of purpose in the course is something Brenda does not express having a problem with. She does not describe feeling affected by the White student, an immensely important instance that differs from an experience like Nyla's. Finally, Brenda's course fostered student learning and growth by focusing on the community partner; in contrast Nyla's course, in being devoted to Whiteness, created a

hostile space for BIPOC that did little to prepare for working with their own community partner.

Perils and Promises of Preparation

The previous theme explored how centering BIPOC students illuminated how Whiteness infiltrated the courses. In this section, we explore how Whiteness continues to impact how the instructors prepare students in their course to engage with partners at specific community partner sites. We asked all students these questions: *What did the professor(s) have you read/do to prepare for the service experience? How did those activities impact your engagement?* In this first example, the service-learning course required that students engage in an after-school program that served primarily Black refugee children. Valencia-Garcia explains "[everyone's] conversation, most conversations outside of class, between students, would be that they were not preparing us very well for being there." Instead, he laments time was "spent going in circles with class discussions in a vague way." Nyla offered suggestions on what could have prepared her better:

> …. I feel like the professor should have given us articles and videos on what we're walking into. So, like dealing with [name of school] students and how most of them are POCs and how most of them come from different, um, backgrounds, socioeconomic classes, and having readings on like what it is for POC to be in a predominantly white area, or what it is like for a student to go to school, who's pressured to go to school and not want to go to school.

Nyla offers practical ways of addressing community partners' needs under the lens of critical consciousness. For example, she suggests that they could have read articles and videos focusing on children with similar backgrounds as those at the site. They could have explored questions such as: What are their backgrounds (i.e. linguistic, socioeconomic, racial, ethnic)? What is it like for them (Black refugee status students) to "go to school" in an area that is predominantly White? What are some pedagogical tools for working with children who are in the process of learning a new language? Nyla shares a desire for her instructors to be intentional in how they create reciprocity with their community partner by first preparing their students with culturally sustaining practices (Paris & Alim, 2014). She points to the critical need for the preparation at the college to include focusing the curriculum on how to effectively support the children where they will be working. Her suggestions demonstrate that she reflected deeply about her experience and what that meant for her to engage in a space, not her own, with integrity.

In contrast, in another service-learning course, instructors prepared their students in a starkly different way by focusing on the community site's context. Interestingly, the course's racial demographics were mostly BIPOC students. In this course, college students worked with local secondary students to mentor them in the college admissions process. Gabby, a 3rd year student, explained, "I felt a big part had to do with our cohort, um, I felt like we were all excited to help because, just because [we had a] similar background to them." Diana agreed that she was excited to give back in a way because she "[navigated] everything by [herself]." She shared how it was "really nice to get that opportunity to help a student out and be like 'this is how you apply to FAFSA, this is how you do this.'" This shared identity seemed to create an intrinsic desire on the part of the students to engage in the partnership. In addition, the instructors did not assume that having a shared identity was a replacement for intentional preparation for the community needs. The instructors spent considerable class time preparing Diana's and Gabby's cohort with specifics on effective mentoring strategies (Paris & Alim, 2014; Price et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2012; Winans-Solis, 2014). Diana told how "[instructors] are a huge thing…. [the instructors] were a huge resource to us in

learning how, how to connect." It's interesting to note that Diana and Gabby did not share the same frustration at having to wade through the process of watching White students process through their privilege and saviorism in the course, presumably because the course was primarily BIPOC students.

Relationality With the Community Partners

Relationality is the interconnectedness drawn between phenomena—in our case that includes the BIPOC students, Whiteness that permeates everything, the partner site, instructors, and classmates. This term addresses the dynamism of the connections BIPOC students had when engaging in service learning. Interviewing BIPOC students about the relationships they built at the service sites demonstrated how their connections were impacted based on their complex identities (Green, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2012; Winans-Solis, 2014). We asked the students: *How did your identity (race, class, ability, etc.) impact the connections you made with the people from the partner site?* Not surprisingly, their answers were nuanced. The connections/ relationships contributed to tokenism, discomfort, meaningful connections, and pressure. We share and analyze data of the relationality of these connections as BIPOC voices are centered.

In two different courses, students engaged in service learning at secondary schools. One focused on college preparation assistance and the other on supporting ELs (English learners). Sharing a minoritized language surfaced as one of the most meaningful connections between BIPOC students and children at two different partner sites. The Spanish-speaking BIPOC students we interviewed formed connections based on their ability to exchange on a deeper level with children/youth who shared their language. The connection, through language and race, provided a space where both groups of students felt their identities were valued and as Diana said, "[We] were bringing something to the table" that those who were monolingual could not bring. Alex explained, "The college students and the high school students empowered each other to feel seen in their respective contexts." Even as the curriculum of service-learning courses and partner sites often embraces a pedagogy of Whiteness due to structural constraints, these students created a space that highlighted and validated non-dominant identities and languages.

Further, some BIPOC students utilized their lived experiences to inform engagement with community partners. Diana shared the identity of the student she worked with as female-identifying, and both were from immigrant families. She explained how she would sometimes "go off the agenda and see how [her student] was feeling." When she focused on her mentee's specific life circumstances, in addition to the college access content, their relationship flourished and became one of trust. She gained confidence in her ability to mentor and make a difference, and this outcome made [her] more confident that [she] could help" another student by leaning on what she knew from her own identity and experiences.

Although shared identities had immense potential for BIPOC students in their respective contexts, it is inaccurate to assume that is always the case. Wilson and Nyla, both working-class, first-generation Black students who attended the same service-learning program (during different years), had distinct experiences. Working at the community site was a relief and confidence booster for Nyla compared to the college classroom. In describing her work with children, she explains, "we would really connect just because we had a lot of similarities and backgrounds in growing up." Her expression of comfort stands in stark contrast to her earlier quotes about the college classroom feeling hostile and negligent of Black identities.

Wilson, in contrast, felt extremely uncomfortable and disconnected with the children despite shared racial identity. He expressed that his identity of being a gay and male student was more salient in this context than being Black. He expressed feeling

worried about sharing himself fully, "dealing with children as a gay person, as a queer person, um, I was like mindful of my actions and, um, what I did, what I said, what I wore." He clarifies the need for instructors to be aware of who their students are and what kind of support they need/want. He expresses how he did not understand enough about the children at the site when he said, "I don't want to be having these conversations about queerness and shit like that with these children, um, because ...I don't know their experience with queerness. So, that could either lead to positive things or negative things and… I didn't want to find out." In Wilson's case, he did not know how those at the partner site would react if he expressed his queerness fully. His insecurity points back to the lack of preparation within the course concerning the context of the partner site. Nyla and Wilson's distinct experiences based on the intersections of their identities underscore the need for instructors to take a nuanced approach to finding placements for students. While Nyla's shared Black identity created connection, Wilson's created discomfort as he was not able to express his intersectional identity of being Black and gay (Mitchell & Soria, 2019).

Relationships built at partner sites can create extra pressure on BIPOC students when the engagement ends at the end of the semester, as they often see themselves in the youth they work with. Brenda lamented, "...it kind of makes me mad that, like, at myself, that once we stopped going, I just cut off everything with that school and, like, the students there." Similarly, Diana said, "I just didn't do a good job…. Part of me feels bad in that way, I created a relationship and I haven't continued it." Both Nyla and Brenda indicated an additional investment with the children and the site where they engaged. Because the connection was strong, and they often "saw themselves" in the students and the partner site, they said they were "mad at themselves" and "felt bad" when the experience ended (Mitchell et al., 2012). They both seemed to take responsibility for what they felt was their failure to continue the relationship with the high school students, despite them both expressing extraneous reasons for why a relationship was difficult to maintain. Importantly, both students were in service-learning programs they deemed to have been supportive and critical in their pedagogies, yet the issue of "feeling bad" persisted. Because the service-learning experience is embedded within the semester time structure, relationships are fostered and then end abruptly. This is another example of how Whiteness disrupts the way relationships are created and valued from the BIPOC students' perspectives.

All of the BIPOC students shared how their experience at the partner sites seemed to be different from that of the White students. They expressed how they were able to connect in meaningful ways with the children at the site because they shared a historical BIPOC background. Like Jones et al. (2011) explain, the BIPOC students in all the partner sites experienced connection with children at the site differently "than their peers with dominant identities" (p. 36). Therefore, they were more likely to experience empowerment, confidence, and connection than their White classmates. Unlike their White classmates who may be overwhelmed by the complexity of social issues they hoped to solve, the BIPOC students in the study already came with lived experiences that mirrored some of the students at the service sites (Winans-Solis, 2014). We noted how often the BIPOC students said they felt "connected" to the children and more comfortable at the site than they did in the college classes, especially when the college classes were majority White students. At the same time, Wilson's experience provides a cautionary tale of how instructors need to understand the nuance of shared identity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BIPOC students in service-learning classrooms have been the central focus of this study for two major reasons: first, because

their experience, voices, and learning are pushed to the margins, and, second, because movements toward the empowerment of BIPOC in service learning necessarily work toward the deconstruction of pedagogies of Whiteness. Critical consciousness pedagogy and critical service learning call for inclusion of community members in spaces of formalized education, like a college or university setting. We kept our focus on BIPOC students in the classroom, without much reference to community partners or their voices, because the work to transform service learning into something more critical needs to be approached from multiple angles: "the demographics of our institutions are changing. Service and service-learning can no longer be framed as an experience of 'giving back' or 'giving to' people less fortunate than ourselves" (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009, p. 187). In addition to the relationship between service-learning courses and community partners, the internal dynamics of such courses require their own scrutiny. On this, we present data from interviews where students had experiences ranging from painful to joyful, alienating to empowering. We contextualize these interviews in the study by analyzing how they viewed their course: how instructors set the tone, how peers treated each other along racial lines, how the curriculum made BIPOC students feel, and how they engaged at the partner sites. Students, in classes with primarily White students, reported the most alienating, uncomfortable, or painful experiences.

On discussions of critical concepts like race, the instructors led from the launching point of privilege, which does not allow for conversations to reach beyond the limitations of how privileged students already understand their own society. Setting up conversations to be more digestible for privileged students lends to the centralization of White identities (Winans-Solis, 2014; Butin, 2006). Critical scholars call for service-learning courses to meet the needs of various students; however, the treatment of White students' learning must be contextualized in how "privileged students also learn at the expense of their peers" (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009, p. 183). Critical scholars ask for instructors to develop curriculum around critical consciousness pedagogy, but we found those concepts were often appropriated rather than embraced because instructors were overly concerned about accommodating their White students. They could be led to critically interrogate their own identity by understanding themselves as racialized through Whiteness and that be the launching point for discussions around their own identity (Leonardo, 2002). To prevent from teaching White students at the expense of BIPOC students and community partners, they must be taught with the intention of connecting their identity deconstruction to something more.

Given the tensions that existed within the service-learning courses, the data suggests we need to decenter Whiteness and implement critical consciousness pedagogy by focusing on the experiences these BIPOC students shared with us. We suggest three overarching recommendations as a result: (1) Resist the urge to center the service-learning preparation and pedagogy on Whiteness even if the class is majority White; (2) create choice and variety within the course and partner sites to address the variety of needs and experiences students bring; and (3) make a conscious effort to create accountable spaces so BIPOC students' experiences are considered and valued, but not tokenized.

First, instructors are used to teaching to the majority, which means primarily White students, especially in service-learning courses. All of our interviews revealed how Whiteness was centered in the courses. Our recommendation is for instructors to focus on the BIPOC students' lived experiences, funds of knowledge, and pedagogical preferences through critical conscious pedagogical strategies (Gonzalez et al., 2006; Paris & Alim, 2014). For example, instructors could implement community circles where students share their positionalities, create surveys with questions about their backgrounds and preferred ways of learning, and assign autobiographical timelines that highlight important

elements of their education journeys and previous service-learning experiences. In addition, the community partner could be invited to the higher education space to share the culture and histories of the participants at their sites so that those identities are not silenced or reified. Instructors can bring empowering BIPOC voices into the classroom through guest speakers, films, articles, and podcasts that take the burden of teaching White students in the class from the BIPOC students.

Second, to address the needs of students who bring different lived experiences, instructors can employ a variety of strategies and options. Choice can be powerful if the instructor focuses on the curriculum content, but allows multiple pathways to arrive at an understanding of the core objective. Some strategies include literature circles and small reading groups where students read and discuss different material connected to the objectives allowing for students to process outside the whole class. The discussion of Whiteness, which is different from the pedagogy of Whiteness, could have multiple pathways that allow for BIPOC and White students to discuss race from multiple perspectives but with the unifying idea that race is dependent on what Leonardo (2002) calls "whiteness" and "colorness" (p. 31). Some students may need to read about White fragility and how Whiteness circulates structurally within our society and education institutions. Others could read about how to empower marginalized voices within colonial spaces—for example, how using the term BIPOC highlights that Blackness and Indigeneity are two additional categories with equal but distinct weight when discussing race. Not all students need to read the exact material or process as an entire class.

Finally, we recognize that CSL is difficult to achieve and maintain. Nevertheless, it is crucial that the instructor is accountable to BIPOC students. We have observed, repeatedly, that when Whiteness is present, critical service learning cannot be achieved and BIPOC students cannot be supported. For example, service-learning instructors often teeter between putting too much focus on BIPOC's racial identity, and neglecting the needs of BIPOC because of their racial identity (Novick et al., 2011). To resolve this constant overcompensation, Novick et al. (2011) suggests instructors consistently monitor the issue to prevent from going one way or another. We would further add to this and say that, while monitoring the issue is important, perhaps more important is the recognition that Whiteness is at the center of this metaphorical teeter-totter. Our data show that instructors' struggle with critical service learning often has to do with their concern for accommodating White students instead of being accountable to BIPOC students.

BIPOC students' experiences and perspectives are often missing from service-learning research and literature. Our study demonstrates that when they are given the weight and attention they deserve, BIPOC students present thoughtful inquiry for how instructors can purposefully analyze their pedagogical decisions with a critical conscious lens. Our research highlights BIPOC students' struggles with the power dynamics of racism and Whiteness in service-learning courses at the college and the partner sites. Although we did not center community partner voices, focusing on BIPOC students facilitates the transformation of service-learning courses for community partners, as some of their lived experiences are intertwined. To advance what our participants shared, we suggest concrete ways instructors can center BIPOC students' lived experiences, funds of knowledge, and pedagogical preferences, create a variety of pathways for reaching the purpose of the service-learning experience, and become accountable to BIPOC students even if they are small in number. Our work here contributes to the decentralization of Whiteness in civic engagement literature. We also recognize the need for critical scholarship that explores potential BIPOC centered pedagogies, so that the decentralization of White-ness can be followed up with further transformations of service-learning pedagogies.

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